The Taking of a Body by The World-Teacher

What it means and implies

BY

E. A. Wodehouse, M.A.

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THE TAKING OF A BODY BY THE WORLD-TEACHER

IT is now widely known that many members of the Theosophical Society and of the Order of the Star in the East believe that the coming World-Teacher will not (if the expression may be employed), appear in His own person, but will use, for the purposes of His ministry, a body specially prepared for Him. And it is also widely known that the body thus prepared will, they believe, be that of His disciple, Krishnamurti. Indeed, it is their conviction that the body in question has already been used, on one occasion, for a few brief moments, and that the Great One spoke a few sentences through His disciple at the Star Anniversary Meeting at Adyar, on December 28th, 1925.

Without going into the many collateral questions, which must obviously arise in connection with a belief of this kind—a belief, let us frankly own, which must, at first sight, appear quite extraordinary and fantastical to the outside world—it is our purpose, in the following few pages, to consider merely what may be called the "mechanical" aspect of the matter; that is to say, the phenomenon of the supersession of the consciousness by another, carried to the extreme point at which the original consciousness may be said to be entirely absent, or dormant, and the invading consciousness in complete possession of the abrogated bodily functions.

Dual Personality

It is unfortunate that the recognised instances of what would appear to be such supersession, which are familiar to students of psychology, are all of a somewhat low order, ranging from cases of a more or less freakish "dualism" of personality, down to the far more undesirable and, for the most part, definitely

evil, cases of "obsession". Within these limits, of course, the phenomenon (or what seems like it) is familiar to students of the abnormal. Thus, cases have been observed and studied, in which one and the same physical body has seemingly been the *habitat* of two, sometimes three, distinct personalities, succeeding each other either without apparent rhyme or reason or, in one or two instances, in a kind of cyclic order. For the evidences which have established, beyond the reasonable doubt of many observers, the distinct and separate identities of such personalities, the reader should consult the books on the subject. It is true that some authorities have held that these apparently separate identities are not really different "persons," but are merely (so to speak), different "facets" of one and the same personality, for some obscure reason dissociated from each other and, by reason of this dissociation, revealing themselves with all the force of distinct identities. Such thinkers would hold that within the vast and unexplored region of the subconscious, or "subliminal" self, there is stored up ample material for the fitting together of several such seemingly different artificial "selves". and that the only real problem is how this inner disintegration into watertight compartments has come about in any particular case. This, of course, is a possible view and, as such, deserves consideration.

Obsession

But it is a view which it is by no means easy to retain, when we actually read the accounts of some of these instances of "dual personality"; while, in so far as it implies the definite denial of the possibility of the invasion and supersession of one personality by another, it would seem to be refuted by the phenomenon of "obsession"—a phenomenon which psychological science has, perhaps, not yet studied to the extent which it deserves, but of which the amplest apparent evidence undoubtedly exists, all the world over, and which has been popularly recognised from the very earliest times.

It is hardly necessary to recall to the reader the frequent mention of this phenomenon in the New Testament. The "casting out of devils" is one of the commonest manifestations, therein recorded, of the miraculous powers of our Lord. There is no country in Asia, to-day, in which this particular class of abnormality, is not a matter of everyday belief; while in Europe there must be literally thousands of people, who personally know of cases which they would feel tempted to explain in these terms (as the only ones covering the symptoms), if only they were not afraid of making themselves ridiculous by suggesting something at present uncertified by official science. But when we consider how much there is, even in our common experience, which official science is not yet prepared to admit, or which it has only recently begun to study, it need not concern us too much, if our theories have not, in every case, the sanction of those who are, *ex hypothesi*, concerned primarily with physical things, and do not pretend to have explored beyond the limits of the physical. The only condition is that the theory suggested should, so far as we can see, be adequate to explain the facts, and, judged from this point of view, preferable to other rival theories. In this event, we may legitimately accept it as an hypothesis, to be retained provisionally until some other better theory comes along.

The Theory Stated

Now, it may be confidently asserted that there are innumerable cases in which the only adequate explanation of the facts, as observed, is supplied by the theory that a given personality actually *can* be invaded, and temporarily ousted from possession of its physical vehicle, by some stronger external entity. There are reasons to believe, moreover, that the older prejudices against such an explanation are rapidly weakening, and that there are many serious students to-day who would be prepared to admit, as within the range of accepted possibility, such cases of possession, or obsession, as are recorded in the New Testament,

and who would by no means regard it as fantastic that, among the powers conferred upon a Priest at ordination, at least one great Church includes that of "exorcism".

Those, moreover, who have made a definite study of the superphysical—and their number is increasing every day—would claim that obsession, or possession, is a fact of which they have certain knowledge;—that it exists as one of the sinister abnormalities to which the human personality, under certain rare conditions, is liable, and that it is but one example of many (as yet) little-understood sources of human misery, with which only a gradually widening knowledge and a less materialistic philosophy will, as time passes, be able to cope.

Spiritualism

But a far wider and more familiar field, in which the phenomenon of the apparent occupation of a physical body by a consciousness other than that of its owner, has recently come to be studied, is, of course, that of spiritualism. This is not the place for any discussion of spiritualism and its place in life. But one fact, at least, has emerged from the modern study of its phenomena; and that is—if the whole thing be not merely vulgar fraud and imposition—the possibility of a living entity (even though "dead" from the point of view of conventional terminology) manifesting through the physical vehicle of another. For this, no doubt, special conditions are required. The passive partner in the transaction must be what is popularly called a "medium"—that is to say, he, or she, must have something in their psycho-physiological make-up, predisposing them to this kind of work; the "medium," in order to vacate his own physical tenement, must relapse into a self-induced state of trance; certain external conditions (*e.g.*, psychic atmosphere, lighting, etc.), must be suitable; and so forth. But, given these conditions, no other explanation of the manifestation at the ordinary

spiritualistic seance is possible, than that, while they last, the medium has ceased to be the active possessor of his own physical body—some, or all, of the functions of which have been appropriated and wielded by the possessing, or manifesting, entity. That is, of course, unless we are prepared to dismiss the whole of spiritualism as conscious or unconscious cheating—which fewer and fewer people, nowadays, will, we imagine, be ready to do.

Difference in Quality

Now it is clear that the type of case, which we have been considering up to this point, has, in respect of "quality", little in common with that from which we set out: namely, the manifestation of a lofty spiritual intelligence through a vehicle specially trained and prepared for that end. But it has this much in common from the purely mechanical point of view—that the possibility of the latter rests, as that of every such case (whether high or low), must rest, on the precedent possibility of the supersession of one consciousness by another, carried to a degree in which the whole functional machinery of the former passes out of the control of its normal owner, and is taken over and energised by the invading consciousness. This is the possibility which a whole wide group of cases of abnormal psychology seems to reveal. It is the possibility which spiritualistic phenomena, once admitted to be true, seem definitely to confirm. And it is this possibility, which those who believe that the coming Spiritual Teacher will manifest through a physical vehicle, specially prepared for Him by a disciple living in the outer world, obviously accept.

Let us remind the reader, at this point, that we are not concerned, in these pages, with the question whether such a spiritual Teacher actually exists, or whether, if existent, there is any reason to believe that He will shortly manifest Himself among men. Nor are we concerned with the purely personal question, as to why—if He exists, and if He is shortly

coming—He should have selected one particular vehicle, and not another. We are concerned here only with the question—which, for want of a better term, we have to call "psychological"—whether the particular mode of manifestation suggested, is, from the purely mechanical point of view, to be conceived as possible. We may, for clearness, state the question as follows: supposing that a great spiritual Teacher is actually coming to the world of men; and supposing that, for special reasons of His own, or for reasons inherent in the nature of the case, He should wish to employ, as His vehicle, the physical body of a disciple; —is such employment conceptually possible? In other words, is there anything, in the observed experience of mankind, analogous to this kind of "vicarious manifestation"—anything which would seem to indicate that it falls within the region of practical possibility?

Dual Use Established

Certain analogies we have already suggested; and from these it would appear that we have to accept, as a strange but none the less existing peculiarity of the physical body, that it is capable, under abnormal circumstances, of becoming detached from the service of its habitual possessor, and being placed at the disposal of some other living entity—good, bad, or indifferent, as the case may be. It would appear, also, that this transference can be effected either by violence, and against the will of the normal owner, as in the case of obsession; or by voluntary abdication on the part of the owner, as in the deliberately induced trance of the medium. What happens exactly in cases of "dual" or "triple" personality is, so far as we know, still obscure. Many of the instances make it appear as though the substitution happened unconsciously and automatically; others—if one may indulge in a speculation—as though it were by some sort of "private arrangement" between the alternating personalities, arrived at somewhere behind the scenes, possibly in the region of the "sub-conscious." Whatever be the

modus operandi, however, the fact remains the same. The physical body, in such cases, instead of being the permanent dwelling-place of a single householder, would seem to be a kind of lodging-house, occupied by successive visitants, each of whom assumes the airs of a proprietor while in temporary possession.

Here, then, are a number of cases, in which the separability of the physical body from its prescriptive owner seems to be more or less established; and it is this separability which, from the mechanical point of view, is the basis of the belief that the coming Teacher will use a body which, prescriptively, belongs to another. It is important to note, moreover, that the cases cited above show that the appropriation can take place in more than one way. For this opens up the suggestion that, in cases of other kinds, it might conceivably happen in quite different ways, determined by the special circumstances of the situation. This is, indeed, what some Theosophists and others would hold with regard to the coming manifestation of the World-Teacher. They would be the last to associate the "vicarious" method, which they believe will be employed by the Great One, with any of the phenomena with which we have just been dealing. It will, in their view, be neither the violent piracy of obsession, nor the supplanting of a passive and entranced subject, as in spiritualism. Nor again will it be that methodless and purposeless alternation, which we find apparently in cases of dual personality. It will, they hold, be something of an altogether saner, healthier and more spiritual kind, involving a delicate adjustment of, what we may call, "super-physiological mechanism", extending right up to a level far beyond that reached by even the most innocent ordinary cases of transferred personality.

In order to give some idea of what is meant here, let us approach the subject from an altogether different angle and, starting in a general way from an order of phenomena with which all the world is familiar, work down from this to a consideration of details.

Inspiration

All of us know, in a vague kind of way, what we mean by "inspiration"; and it is a thing which even the most cautiously-minded of us are prepared to admit into our vocabularies, as denoting a psychological fact. We speak of the "inspiration" of the poet or the artist, of the preacher or the orator. More than that, we are most of us ready to acknowledge moments in our own existence at which, in one way or another, we felt "inspired." What we mean by this is, as a rule, some curious enlightenment, or enhancement, of our higher faculties, for which at the time we were unable to account, and which, on looking back on it, still puzzles us. Nearly everybody has these moments in which he is "more than himself," in which he becomes aware of hitherto unsuspected powers, and in which great ideas and high emotions seem, as it were, to be unleashed by some agency other than his own will.

Now no one, in these days of psychological study, will be rash enough to assert that the majority of these "moments of inspiration" are due to external agencies. Science has revealed to us enough of the potentialities of the so-called "subliminal self", to show that a sudden release of some of its locked-up energies—what it terms a "subliminal uprush"—may be quite sufficient to give to any individual a felt enhancement of his normal consciousness, so startling in its effects that it will seem to come from a source altogether outside him. At the same time, research along a number of kindred lines has done much to reveal the fact that what is called "inspiration" is, indeed, a very vast and very profound subject, ranging from the not uncommon excitations of consciousness, just alluded to, right up to experiences so transcendent, lifted so far above the levels of normal life, that they take us into the very heart of the spiritual world and the innermost mysteries of the religious. No one, for example, can read any first-rate book on *Mysticism*, without realising how majestic a subject of study is

there opened out; nor can he close it without the profound and humble conviction that life contains whole vast regions of lofty experience, which are shut off from most of us either by our lack of inner development, or by the noisy insistence of the outer world.

Inspiration, then, is a matter, not only of the intensest reality, but of the most far-reaching possibilities. In its loftiest form, it would seem to be nothing less than the intimate blending, in some moment of ineffable communion, of the human and the Divine—the linking up of the finite with the Infinite. But—and here is the point of issue—*when we have said this, what have we really said about it?* How far have we really formulated to ourselves, or attempted to explain, the processes by which it works? The language of the Mystics themselves is nearly always pictorial and symbolic. It describes, it does not define. It endeavours (vainly enough), to make us share the rapture, to make us participants in the illumination. But of what "actually happens" it can tell us nothing.

Biblical References

When, for example, we turn to the Bible and read that "The Spirit of the Lord descended upon" one of the personages of sacred history "and he prophesied", we may legitimately ask: *What actually happened?* Or when we read that Stephen was *"filled with the Holy Ghost,"* we may again ask: *What actually happened?* And by "actually happened" one would mean this: What, in that moment of divine inspiration, was the actual relation of the inspired personality to the inspiring agency? How far did the control extend? Was it partial only, manifesting itself as a felt external stimulus, evoking in the personage in question, certain latent powers, which he thereupon proceeded to wield as his own? Or was it something far more compelling—something which, as it were, took complete possession of every faculty of the man and became, for the time being, the energising centre

of individuality, using the man and his organs of expression actually as Its own? In this case, it is clear, we are near to that definite supersession of personality, which we have already noticed on a much lower level. Granted that we have, in such happenings, an example of a personality seemingly superseded by something greater than personality, yet, from the mechanical standpoint, the cases are parallel. For that which supersedes is, at all events, a Living Intelligence, and It is making use of a vehicle belonging prescriptively to its normal owner.

Mystic Schools

Or, to take another example—when in the Old Testament we read of "the school of the prophets", it is no unnatural question to ask: "What was this school, and what exactly did its members learn?" Obviously the school was one in which students—presumably, boys and young men—were trained to be "prophets". But what kind of training did this imply, and what was the actual process, or technique, involved in "being a prophet"? The conclusion is irresistible that it had to do with some process of inner self-discipline, by which the pupil was trained to yield himself, more and more fully as he advanced in his training, to the incursions of some higher spiritual Influence. Almost certainly, too, this would involve some course of long-continued self-purification, one very important object of which would be to ensure that the student should be permitted to suffer no harm from the impact of so tremendous a spiritual force. This assumption is confirmed by what we know of occult and mystical schools, all the world over, from the beginnings of history. In all such schools a long process of purification has ever been insisted upon, as a necessary precondition of the reception of loftier spiritual energies. This is why every school of Eastern Yogâ, for example (every school, that is, which is on the right lines), lays down a regular system of moral training, which the pupil must first pass

through before he is considered fit to be instructed in the higher mysteries of the science.

Common-sense alone is sufficient to indicate how necessary this is. The sudden impact of enormously potent forces, for which the student is not prepared, must have the effect of disorganising his nature, and will almost inevitably result in insanity or hysteria, or in a complete moral breakdown. This is the universal experience of those who have studied the pedagogics of the Higher Life. And this is the reason why all schools of this type have been so careful to insist upon the right restrictions. The "school of the prophets"—if it was a serious school at all, with a clear and definite spiritual object—must have been no less strict in its insistence upon the most rigorous self-purification. Consequently we may detect in it, presumptively, a hint of something which is germane to our present enquiry: namely, a school, which by a process of moral purification, trained its pupils to become ever more fully receptive of the influx of a lofty Spiritual Life, or Intelligence, until, at the end of their training, they emerged as "prophets." And the word, "prophet," as the most cursory reading of the Old Testament will show, meant, for the Jews, one capable of yielding himself to divine inspiration and of being used, by such Agency, as a vehicle of spiritual truth.

Since, however, much of this is presumptive—at least, in relation to the particular school to which we have been alluding—let us turn to another example, which, while it may appeal less to the modern reader, was yet, for the people of its own world and time, the very centre and focus of their religious life. We refer to the famous oracle at Delphi, and the part played there by the Pythian priestess. This priestess, as is well-known, went into a deliberately induced trance—just as the modern spiritualistic "medium" does—by the method of inhaling mephitic fumes from a hole in the earth immediately under her tripod. When the trance was complete, the God Apollo, it was believed, took possession of her and spoke through

her lips. In a well-known passage of the Roman poet, Virgil, he describes the priestess as *plena deo,* "filled with the God"; and this was what every Greek and, later, every Roman believed. It was accepted, as an article of faith, that, at the supreme moment, the priestess was no longer the tenant of her own body, but that it had become the vehicle of divinity itself.

Philosophical View

Nor was the belief in this kind of "possession" confined to such special instances as those of entranced priestesses. Plato definitely extends the idea in his philosophy, speaking of the possibility of rising to a height of spiritual illumination in which a man is, literally, *entheos, i.e.*, "with God in him"; and from this Greek word our own word "enthusiasm" is derived. The idea is to be found in all Faiths, with the possible exception of Buddhism. In all, the phenomenon of "divine possession" has been recognised as the loftiest of spiritual experiences; and, in every case, it has meant the seizing upon an individual by a Divine Spirit, or Intelligence, and the mastering of him so completely that he thereupon becomes, for all effective purposes, merely the organ, or vehicle, of the invading Power—the normal man, meanwhile, remaining, during the period of Its operation, in what may be called a state of suspension.

Many more instances could be given, from the records of the religions and from the general spiritual history of mankind, to show the existence, in all ages, of a belief in this kind of "plenary inspiration". And it is really nothing more than this, from one point of view, that is claimed by those who speak of the "taking of a body", by the coming World-Teacher. Indeed, the parallel is made the stronger by the fact that the life of the World-Teacher (as is understood by all students of occultism), belongs to a level which far transcends what we know, down here, as the limitations of individuality. The "taking of a body", therefore, in this case, must be something much more

than the mere supersession of personality by personality, with which students of abnormal psychology are familiar. It must be rather the utilisation of a body by some Force so far-reaching in Its potencies, and belonging to so extended a life, that It may be considered, in many respects, impersonal; the phenomenon thus becoming like that of the general type of inspiration which we have found in the case of the prophets and mystics of history.

Common-sense View

There is another thing also to be remembered, which we may briefly mention at the risk of turning aside for a moment from our main theme, and that is that, so far as the world is concerned, the question whether the phenomenon, in this particular case, is one of the definite "taking of a body" by some external Being, or merely one of a lofty inspiration in the ordinary sense of the word, is not in many ways of great practical account. The important thing will, and must, be the quality and power of the influence, thus generated, rather than the question from whence it comes. For the hearer or observer, the phenomenon will be one centred in the disciple, and the critical factor will be its effect on *him* and, through him, on others. The source of the phenomenon, and its precise nature, will always be remoter matters, with which the large majority of those, who come within the range of His influence, will not concern themselves. They will be interested only in its results, and it will be by these that they will judge of it. Thus—whether or no the difference be produced by a sudden access of impersonal "inspiration", or by the definite substitution of another life as the energising centre of his physical being—the test of it, for the outside observer, will be in the *quality* which it brings with it. And rightly so. Such people will be making only a just demand if they expect—before accepting any statements or predictions as true—an influence and an "atmosphere" which they will themselves feel to betoken something more than human. They will be justified, for ex-

ample, in expecting a compelling power and sweetness of an altogether unusual kind, together with a wisdom and a beauty of verbal expression quite beyond anything which the disciple is known to possess in the moments when he is simply his normal self. And if they get what they expect and are profoundly moved by it, it will, for many at least, be a matter of indifference, what is the hidden cause of the change. The value of what is offered them will be estimated in its intrinsic, not in its derivative character. They will judge it by what it is in itself, and not by the source from which it reputedly comes. So that, from this point of view, the whole question of the "taking of a body" might reasonably be shelved, and those who believe that the phenomenon in question will take place might well content themselves with saying: "We understand that something of this sort will happen. But do not exercise your minds about it beforehand. Just wait and see; and, if and when it happens, judge of the whole thing by your own felt reaction upon it. If what you then feel forces you to believe, then believe. If it does not, then reject."

This would be a thoroughly common-sense position to take up; and in actual practice it will be the position which, for the most part, the very exigencies of the case will bring about. There are, however, certain reasons why the more definite statement—that whatever effects may be observed will be due to the actual "taking of the body" by the World-Teacher—has to be considered, and not, as prudence might suggest, thrust into the background.

A Clear Position

Perhaps the most important of these is that it is very necessary, from the outset, to insist upon the fact that the disciple, Krishnamurti, is not, and never will be, himself the World-Teacher. As has been seen recently, in the many articles in the Press, this mistake has been almost universally made; and it is

one which cannot be too emphatically repudiated. To allow it to pass uncontradicted would, amongst other things, be grossly unfair to the disciple himself, who would be the first to shrink from such a claim. It would also be unfair to others, who, while proclaiming the near advent of the World-Teacher, have never said, and would be the last to assert, that Krishnamurti is this Teacher. In order, therefore, to make it as clear as possible that he is not, considerable emphasis has obviously to be laid on the explanation *why* and *how* he is not. And thus it has had to be stated, with the utmost clearness, that his only personal share in the coming manifestation will be that the World-Teacher will appropriate, and use as a vehicle, his physical body. And it has been necessary to make this statement, even at the risk of propounding something which most hearers will regard as a fantastic absurdity—an absurdity which, incidentally, these pages are endeavouring, in some poor fashion, to modify.

There are other reasons, of course, into which it is not necessary to enter here. One is that, in making the above statement, those who stand before the world as the ostensible leaders of the Star Movement have not been entirely free agents, having had to obey orders from a very much loftier source; again, that for them, in virtue of their occult knowledge, the thing is a fact and must be stated as such, however repugnant it may be to what is called "common-sense" and "reason" among those who do not share this knowledge.

For our present purposes, however, there are two very real reasons why, having set out to examine the phenomenon of the supersession of personality, we should not allow the enquiry to trail off into the practical (and in many ways quite reasonable), compromise of "it doesn't really matter", or of "wait and see".

The first is that, in order to bring the phenomenon into line with others already familiar to psychological students, we were compelled, at the outset, to draw our

parallels from somewhat dubious regions, and that it is essential that it should not be allowed to remain under the shadow of these questionable associations. We have, in other words, to show how, from the very nature of the case, this higher kind of supersession, while illustrating the same mechanical principle, yet differs in every respect of *quality* and intrinsic dignity; and our fresh start, a few pages back, from the subject of "inspiration" was meant to lead up to this. The other is, that it is very necessary to show something of the conditions implicit in this correlation of a lower and a higher life—what it means for the lesser partner in the process, what are the demands which it *ex hypothesi* makes of him and particularly why, in any such case, a long and difficult course of preparation is necessary before he can sustain adequately the burden which it imposes upon him. All this is necessary in order to bring out the true character of the relationship of which we are speaking, and to temper something of its obvious strangeness by revealing its nobler and more spiritual side. And this can only be done by adhering strictly to the definite, objective statement that the supersession will consist in the "taking of a body".

Super-Physiology

We have to consider, briefly, what the infusion of an enormously potent spiritual life into a physical body, belonging to a lesser life, must mean for the latter. And in order to make this clear, we shall have, for a moment to trespass upon a ground which is, for most people, as yet, a *terra incognita*, though the number of explorers in it is becoming greater every year. We refer to that science of what may be called "super-physiology", of which occult philosophy has so much to say—the science, namely, which tells us of the subtler, superphysical vehicles of man, of their amazingly delicate complexity, and of the invisible links (though visible to clairvoyant sight), by which they are correlated together. We have only to

know a little of this science, to realise that the preparation of any disciple's body to be the living vehicle, or instrument, of a greater Being, immensely beyond him in spiritual development, is, and must be, a supremely difficult task, involving the cautious obedience to a whole host of laws, which for the man of the outer world simply do not exist—in the sense that they lie altogether outside his horizon of knowledge and experience. To mention only one out of these many complexities—there are, as all students of occultism are aware, in the physical body, as well as in each of the subtler vehicles, a number of centres, or *chakrams*, which serve as vital links between each such vehicle and those next to it in order of fineness or density. These centres are, as it were, the very pivots of the higher conscious life of man. In order, therefore, to prevent the serious, and possibly disastrous, disturbance which would be wrought by the invasion of an immensely higher spiritual life, pressing downwards into physical manifestation through these subtler vehicles, long and careful preparation is essential. For a force, on superphysical levels, is just as much a reality as is a force in our lower physical world. In order that it may be safely harnessed and distributed, the necessary machinery must be available; and any flaw in the mechanism will be visited by penalties even, perhaps, more devastating than those which would follow upon such a flaw in the world of physical things. So too—if the Higher Force uses merely the physical vehicle, while the subtler vehicles are temporarily withdrawn or detached, this physical vehicle must be capable of sustaining the strain and burden of that terrific impact. Not only must it be attuned to high spiritual vibrations, in general, but it must be attuned to the *special type* of spiritual vibrations belonging to the greater Being in question. And this attuning is no matter of a sudden wrench. Just as in the handling of a delicate stringed instrument, the strings have to be gently and slowly stretched and in no wise treated roughly, so is it here too. And all this requires a long period of time, and incessant care and supervision.

Mystical Conditions

Finally, one further important consideration may be mentioned. Those who have studied the psychology of the spiritual life, as revealed in the records of the Saints and Mystics, will be aware how often the incursion of a higher Force has been accompanied by a kind of paralysis of the lower man. In the upper regions of his being he is intensely, supremely, alive; in the lower, he is only too frequently *non compos sui*. The very intensity of his inner illumination tends to dazzle him, to deprive him of his faculties, to render him inarticulate, to cut him off from the world and its life. The typical mystical condition has ever been one of "trance", or "ecstasy". It is only the very greatest of the Mystics, the true spiritual giants, who have been able, so to speak, to "digest" their highest experience and to turn it to practical account in work for their fellow men. And even among the greatest, only the handful, the very few, have been in living contact with the manifold life of their time, have been fully conversant with its problems and, in the modern sense of the word, "efficient."

Yet it is obviously all this that is demanded, where the question is one of a mighty Spiritual Teacher, coming to bring to mankind the light and leading that it needs. Such a Teacher must touch every point of the world's complex existence; He must deal with all its varied problems; He must be practical and efficient in the loftiest and fullest sense. Of what use, then, would a physical vehicle be to Him, which, the moment it felt His mightier life, were to collapse into trance or ecstasy, and become inward, instead of outward, turned? We touch here upon one of the very greatest difficulties of the task of preparation. The natural tendency of the human make-up, when it feels the contact of a spiritual life greater than its own, is to retreat inward, to hug the treasure to its breast, to lose itself in the rapture of its own enhanced sense of being. And in this tendency the physical body also shares. Its automatic reaction upon the positiveness of any influx of a higher life is to become, itself,

negative, to surrender itself to a state of quiescence, to become soothed, lulled, enfolded. Now all this is of course, exactly the contrary of what is required of a body, which is to be used as the active instrument of high purposes. Such a body, in order to be of real service, must *ex hypothesi* be capable of sustaining the highest pressure of influx, or inspiration, while at the same time remaining active, alert, aware, and in full possession of its faculties. (The perceptive reader will, perhaps, catch a glimpse here of the respective functions of Mysticism and Occultism in the economy of the higher spiritual life.)

The Case Stated

Now, what we have been saying leads us back naturally to a point which we left some few pages ago. It will be remembered that, after retailing certain of the methods by which, in abnormal cases, the supersession of one personality by another could be brought about, we stated that none of these methods would apply to so altogether exceptional a phenomenon as that of the "taking of a body" by a great spiritual Being, for the purpose of His manifestation in the outer world. The whole spirit and intention of the preparation, to which we have briefly been alluding, will have sufficiently indicated the difference. Instead of there being no correlation between the invading life and its appropriated vehicle—which is what we find in spiritualism, in cases of multiple personality and, of course, most of all in the horrible phenomenon of obsession—there is here the most careful and delicate attuning. The disciple is, as it were, reaching upward the whole time, in order to meet and absorb the descending life at the highest possible level. To the exigencies of that life he surrenders the whole of his personality, remoulding to the required "quality" anything in him which is in the least inharmonious, and subduing deliberately his own personal "note" to the note of the Greater One. More than this, he must, if the offering which he makes is to be practically useful, habituate the currents of his being to

flow outwards, so that the Higher Life may not have to force them into unaccustomed channels, when the time comes for utilising them in the work of helping and teaching the world. There must here, therefore, be nothing passive or inert, no mere basking in spiritual sunlight, no hoarding of the treasure—above all, nothing in the way of trance or merely absorbent ecstasy. All this self-negation, this refusal to appropriate to the separate self that which belongs to the world, makes a demand of the most exacting nature. For be it remembered that, all through the period of training, the influence of the Great One is playing upon the vehicles of the disciple. The effective "tuning" comes from above. Consequently, there is every temptation to bask and absorb, instead of turning resolutely outwards; and only those who have tasted of it can, one supposes, realise the deliciousness of the higher spiritual influences that flow from such a Being.

The Offering of a Body

The "taking of a body" is thus, in many real ways, far more of a surrender than a taking. The initiative, for all effective purposes, comes from below. It is the disciple who offers, not the Master who seizes. And the same deliberate initiative belongs to the whole process of purgation and attuning, by which the giver strives to make the gift worthy of acceptance. At any moment, the fine web of correlation between the greater and the lesser lives could be shattered by some misdemeanour on the part of the latter. There is no compulsion; the offering is a free one. And being free, it is from the first *self-conscious*. When, after many years, its consummation is complete, it will manifest as a perfectly frictionless interplay between the higher and the lower, by which, at the merest touch or hint, the latter will step aside in favour of the former, remaining ready to reassert itself the moment the greater life withdraws. There is nothing here of violence, of *force majeure*; nothing of pathological nullity (trance, and so forth), brought about

in order to create a vacuum for the superseding energy. Add to which, finally, that, in order that the correlation may be perfect, there must be maintained an absolutely spotless purity, as well as physical health and well-being—and it will be seen that no excessive claim was made, when we remarked, a few pages back, that the methods involved in this loftier kind of supersession were altogether "saner, healthier and more spiritual", than those employed in the lower and more pathological types with which the student of abnormal psychology is familiar.

Nevertheless, mechanically—and here we come back to our starting point—all are on the same footing. The mechanical *crux* is the ousting, or complete supersession, of one personality by another. Once this is admitted as a possibility, then every variety of the phenomenon—voluntary and involuntary, high and low—becomes automatically possible; for all perform precisely the same operation, only in different ways. Viewed in this light, the "taking" of the body of a pupil by some exalted Spiritual Intelligence, as a vehicle through which help and teaching may be given to the outer world, is only a more august example of the same piece of mechanical supersession by which a disembodied entity, at a seance, "takes" the body of a medium, or by which some horrible creature of the Astral underworld "takes" the body of a weak-willed victim in the phenomenon of "obsession." The point is that the body is capable of being "taken"—that it is not the inalienable thing which our materialistic way of thinking too often makes us suppose it to be; in a word, that no man's body is, in truth, himself. "Man has a soul" is our ordinary phrase. "Man *is* a soul and has a body" is the truer mode of expression, from the point of view of spiritual reality. Thus it is that, at long intervals in the world's history, a chosen disciple has the privilege of making the supreme sacrifice and yielding his physical vehicle to a greater than himself, for the helping of the world —a sacrifice which could not be made, were that vehicle an inalienable thing. For he gives, not what he *is*, but what he ***has***.

Conclusion

Such, in very brief outline, are the "mechanics" of this question of the "taking of a body", about which so much has been heard of late in connection with the belief in the near coming of a great Spiritual Teacher. It is perhaps only necessary to add one further remark. In view of all that we have said about the length and arduousness of the process of preparation, it is only right, we think, to let our readers know that the body, in the present instance, is not a sudden, or a recent selection, but has been definitely under training, for the purpose referred to, for the last sixteen years. It was in Adyar, in the year 1910, that the information was first given out to a limited circle of people, that the boy, Krishnamurti, had been selected by the World-Teacher to provide the vehicle for the approaching manifestation. From the point of view of worldly wisdom, the announcement of its destiny at that early date might well have seemed—had there been no higher Authority behind it—the rashest of speculations. As things have turned out, however, those who remember the starting point of the preparation sixteen years ago, and who have followed its development since that time, have (or, at least, seem to themselves to have), the strongest of all reasons for believing that, in this strange and little-understood world of ours, even the strangest things may sometimes be true, and even the most derided belief occasionally be worthy of respectful consideration.